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TOURNAMENT OFF

NCAA cancels men's and women's college basketball championships in response to virus outbreak

CHRISTIAN PETERSEN TNS

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Gov. Beshear asks schools to shut down for 2 weeks

BY VALARIE HONEYCUTT SPEARS AND JOHN CHEVES
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Gov. Andy Beshear on Thursday asked public and private schools in Kentucky to — as of Monday — cease in-person classes for at least two weeks to curb the coronavirus outbreak.

Beshear said he was making the recommendation on the advice of public health officials.

"It is a big but necessary step," said Beshear. "It should not evoke fear."

For those districts that have a spring break scheduled in the week that follows the two-week closing, he is asking them to take the third week off as well. Spring break in Fayette County is March 30 through April 3.

Fayette officials said Thursday night that schools in the district would close starting Monday and will not reopen until April 6.

Beshear said while kids don't appear to be as affected by the virus as older people, children can spread the virus and "this is another critical step to take on social distancing and what we are trying to do to protect the most vulnerable."

On Wednesday, Beshear had warned Kentucky school superintendents that they should be ready to close their districts on short notice, within 72 hours if need be. Superintendents have this week been reaching out to the Kentucky Department of Education to

SEE SCHOOLS, 2A

March Madness leads canceled events list

BY EDDIE PELLS
Associated Press

The world's sports schedule cratered at warp speed Thursday, with one of the biggest events on the U.S. calendar, the fun-filled and colorful college basketball tournament known as March Madness, becoming the first mega-event to be scrubbed due to fear of the spread of the coronavirus.

Leaders at all levels of sports, including the NCAA, NBA, NHL and Major League Baseball, decided the risk of playing games with the threat of the virus hanging over them was too great despite the billions of dollars — to say nothing of the trophies, pride and once-in-a-lifetime experiences — hanging in the balance.

By late in the afternoon of an extraordinary, headline-a-minute day across a pandemic-rattled globe, the NCAA, which regulates March Madness and all U.S. college sports, basically had no choice. With conferences and individual teams calling off their basketball seasons at breakneck pace, the

SEE CANCELED, 2A

ALEX SLITZ aslitz@herald-leader.com
Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton held a press conference Thursday to recommend postponing or canceling all public events for the foreseeable future to help combat the spread of the coronavirus.

Mayor calls for events to be canceled or postponed

BY BETH MUSGRAVE
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Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton recommended Thursday that all public events be canceled or postponed to stop the spread of the coronavirus or COVID-19.

"We recognize this will be painful for some groups," Gorton said. But canceling such events is necessary to "protect the lives of our citizens."

Fayette County Health Commissioner Kraig Humbaugh said the recommendation to ban large public gatherings will be in effect indefinitely as the city and state try to clamp down on the spread of the respiratory illness. Ten people in Kentucky have tested positive as of 6 p.m. Thursday night.

"Several events have already been canceled around town," Gorton said. "The Kentucky High School Athletic Association has canceled the boys' and girls' Sweet 16 tournaments. The University of Kentucky and Transylvania University have switched to online instruction and people are avoiding large public gatherings."

Keeneland announced shortly after Gorton's press conference that the first two weeks of its early April spring meet will be held without spectators.

Lexington Public Library also announced that all of its public events and group activities have been canceled. All libraries will remain open for now. Anyone who has been exposed to the virus or has exhibited symptoms of the illness should remain at home, library officials said.

> "WE RECOGNIZE THIS WILL BE PAINFUL FOR SOME GROUPS.
>
> *Lexington Mayor Linda Gorton*

KHSAA Commissioner Julian Tackett said the organization ultimately decided to cancel the girls' and boys' state championship tournaments after talking with health officials such as Humbaugh. The information on best practices changes almost hourly, he said.

"We literally went from just small crowds to canceling the tournament within an hour," Tackett said.

Tackett said they knew of other large events that were pointing to the KHSAA tournament as a reason to move forward with their own events. That didn't sit well with the organization.

Tackett later said the annual tournament is a financial boon for the city of Lexington and for the KHSAA.

But people's health and stopping the spread of COVID-19 is more important, he said.

Earlier this week, Gorton announced that all senior centers will close Friday and all

SEE MAYOR, 2A

ALEX WELSH NYT

BONUS CONTENT

TAKING CARE DURING THE CORONAVIRUS OUTBREAK

For up-to-date news and cancellations, visit **kentucky.com.** For information on what you need to know to take care of yourself and others during this pandemic, including what it's like to have coronavirus and what you need if you are quarantined, go to the Coronavirus section of your eEdition, available behind the local sections, at **kentucky.com/eedition.**

At least 2 new Kentucky coronavirus cases announced

BY ALEX ACQUISTO AND JOHN CHEVES
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FRANKFORT

At least two new presumptive cases of novel coronavirus were confirmed in Kentucky on Thursday, bringing the total number to 10, Gov. Andy Beshear said.

One is in Fayette County and the other is in Jefferson County, Beshear said in an afternoon Capitol news conference. Both are in isolation — one in a hospital, the other at home.

Beshear confirmed that Thursday's new Louisville case is the Humana employee that the company, earlier in the day, announced had tested positive for the viral respiratory illness.

That brings the total number of confirmed cases so far to three in Lexington, two in Louisville and five directly

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